

Test Your Home for Elevated Radon Levels: January is National Radon Action Month

Dover – January is National Radon Action Month and a perfect time to test your home for radon, the leading cause of lung cancer death for non-smokers. If elevated radon levels are found, the Division of Public Health (DPH) encourages homeowners to install a mitigation system that removes the gas from around the home's foundation. Homeowners can call DPH for a list of trained and certified contractors at 302-744-4546 or visit: www.RadonSafeDelaware.org.

Radon is an invisible, odorless, tasteless and radioactive gas that occurs naturally in rocks and soils throughout the world. This gas may be found in homes and buildings; even new construction can contain radon. Since newer homes are often more airtight than older ones they can allow higher concentrations of radon to accumulate and may be more likely to lead to health problems.

According to information published by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the two general areas in Delaware that exhibit the highest potential for elevated radon in homes are in New Castle County (Middletown and Odessa). But radon can occur in homes anywhere in Delaware. Radon is generally associated with granitic rocks and certain sediments. These geologic formations can be sources for radon gas.

Radon test data from inside homes, specifically in basements, and to lesser extent first floors, have been collected nationally since 1985. The data are organized by ZIP code and include approximately 35,700 tests performed from 1993 through 2011, of which over 32,000 results came from tests conducted in New Castle County. Using radon test data, DPH produced a

map to aid in showing geographic areas of increased radon risk.

This year, in honor of National Radon Action Month, DPH will be re-launching ads, a press release, and social media to remind people of the importance of testing for radon. The campaign will include television public service announcements and advertisements on mobile devices in New Castle and Kent counties. The goal of the campaign is to increase awareness of radon risks and to urge home testing.

“January is a good time to remind people that they should test their residences for radon every few years,” said Dr. Karyl Rattay, DPH director. “The idea is that with the New Year, there are simple things you can do to protect your family and the air they breathe.”

EPA recommends that a home be fixed if its radon level is 4 pCi/L (picocuries per liter) or higher. And, because there is no known safe level of exposure to radon, you should consider fixing your home even if your tested radon levels are under 4 pCi/L but over 2 pCi/L. By county, the ZIP code areas showing the greatest percentages of homes exceeding the EPA action level are:

New Castle County

- Middletown (27 percent)
- Odessa (22 percent)
- Townsend (17 percent)
- Arden (17 percent)
- Hockessin (17 percent)
- Talleyville (15 percent)

Kent County

- Smyrna (13 percent)
- Dover (12 percent)
- Clayton, Frederica and Magnolia (7 – 8 percent)

Sussex County

- Greenwood (5 percent)
- Dagsboro (6 percent)
- Lewes and Milton (4 percent)

“High Updated radon incidence data has been available for the public for many years but it is important to remind people that it is there,” said Kurt Olinger, DPH radon program manager. “Testing for radon is easy and the benefits are immense.”

To view the radon Delaware map or further information, visit: www.RadonSafeDelaware.org. DPH has radon test kits available free of charge while supplies last. The test kits may also be purchased at most hardware stores. To request a free radon test kit, contact the DPH radon office at 302-744-4546 or call 800-464-HELP (4357).

Individuals seeking TTY services should call 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460. A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind, or speech-disabled can use a TTY to type his/her conversation to a relay operator, who then reads the typed conversation to a hearing person at the DPH call center. The relay operator relays the hearing person's spoken words by typing them back to the TTY user. To learn more about translation services and TTY availability in Delaware, visit delawarerelay.com.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, drink almost no sugary beverages.